

School Readiness

OBJECTIVE

A state-funded initiative (jointly funded by the Connecticut Departments of Education and Social Services and administered by the Department of Education) that develops a network of school readiness programs to:

- Significantly increase the number of spaces in accredited and/or approved programs for young children to provide access to high-quality school readiness programs;
- Significantly increase the number of full-day, full-year spaces to meet family needs; and
- Share cost for school readiness and child-care programs among the state and its various agencies, the communities and families.

OVERVIEW

Established in 1997 under Public Act No. 97-259, An Act Concerning School Readiness and Child Day Care, this legislation established a grant program to provide spaces in accredited or approved school readiness programs for eligible children in priority school districts and districts with severe-need schools.

Priority School Districts

These districts receive a grant allocation for spaces for eligible children who reside in priority school districts, that is based on a formula that uses the average number of enrolled kindergartners in each priority school district for the three years prior to the year the grant is to be paid and the ratio of the average percentage of free and reduced meals for all severe-need schools in the district.

Severe-Need Schools

This is a competitive grant program for spaces for eligible children who reside in an area served by a priority school. Each eligible municipality or regional school system where such a school is located may apply for a grant in an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars. Grant awards are made annually to eligible communities, for a period of five years. The chief elected official and the superintendent of schools jointly submit a plan for the expenditure of the funds and the responses to the local requests for proposals process.

To review the RFP for School Readiness for Priority School Districts or Severe-Need Schools, please refer to the RFP button on the School Readiness Overview page.

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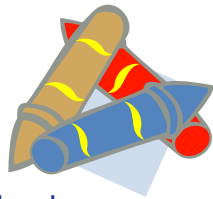
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SCHOOL READINESS COUNCIL

The chief elected official and the superintendent of schools jointly appoint and convene a school readiness council with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues relating to school readiness including the application for school readiness grants. The school readiness council is composed of the chief elected official or designee, the superintendent of schools or management level staff person, parents, representatives from programs such as Head Start, family resource centers, nonprofit and for profit child-care centers, group day-care homes, pre-kindergarten and nursery schools, family day-care home providers and representatives from the community who provide services to children.

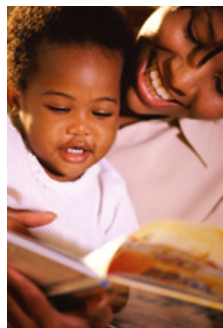
ELIGIBILITY

Resident children in an eligible community who are three and four years old and children, age five, who are not eligible to enroll in school, may enroll in a school readiness program. Under Public Act No. 99-230 a school readiness council may elect to reserve five percent of its spaces for five-year-olds eligible to enroll in school provided they have been in the school readiness program for one year and the parent signs the *Option to Exempt Attendance of Child Five or Six Years of Age From School* form.

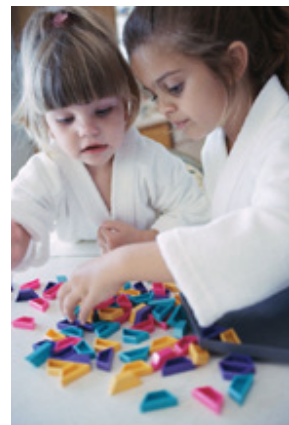
At least 60 percent of the children enrolled must be at or below 75 percent of the State Median Income.

PROGRAM TYPES

- **Full-Day/Full-Year Programs** Provide services for 10 hours per day for 52 weeks per year. Reimbursed at \$7,000 per child.
- **Part-Day/Part-Year Programs** Provide services for at least 2.5 hours per day for 180 consecutive days. Reimbursed at \$4,500 per child.
- **Extended-Day Programs** Provide services that extend the hours, days and/or weeks of programming for children who are in an existing part-time program not funded by School Readiness dollars, in order to provide those children with a full-time program of 10 hours per day for 52 weeks. Reimbursed at \$2,500 per child.



All programs must charge parent fees, based on the Department of Social Services School Readiness Sliding Fee Scale, and/or utilize the Child Care Subsidy Certificates from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). School Readiness Councils may exempt part-day programs from charging parent fees. Exempt programs are not eligible to use certificates from CCAP.



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REQUIREMENTS

In the Priority School Districts, the school readiness council shall issue a local request for proposals to identify and fund local early care and education programs to provide school readiness and child day-care spaces. After a review by the council to ensure that the proposals address all the requirements of the school readiness legislation, the school readiness council shall, within their allocation, purchase capacity in public schools, for profit and nonprofit early childhood programs, Head Start and state funded day-care programs. All programs must be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and complete that process within three years of being awarded the funds, or be approved by Head Start, or meet the criteria established by the Commissioner of Education which is known as the Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs. At least 60 percent of the spaces in a priority school district community must be full-day/full-year spaces.

Funded severe-need schools must provide a minimum of 15 full-day/full-year spaces for children in the severe-need school enrollment area. The school readiness council may purchase capacity in early care and education programs such as public schools, for profit and nonprofit early childhood programs, Head Start and state funded day-care programs. These programs must be accredited by NAEYC or complete the process within three years of being awarded the funds, or be approved by Head Start, or meet the criteria established by the Commissioner of Education which is known as the Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs.

QUALITY COMPONENTS

The legislation has identified specific requirements for school readiness programs as part of the continuum of services in quality programs that meet the needs of children and families. These components include:

- A plan for collaboration with other community programs and services, including public libraries and for coordination of resources in order to facilitate full-day and year-round, child care and education programs for children of working parents and parents in education or training programs;
- Parent involvement, parenting education and outreach;
- Referrals for health service, including referrals for appropriate immunizations and screenings;
- Nutrition services;
- Referrals to family literacy programs that incorporate adult basic education and provide for the promotion of literacy through access to public library services;
- Admission policies that promote enrollment of children from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds and from other communities;
- A plan of transition for participating children from the school readiness program to kindergarten and provide for the transfer of records from the program to the kindergarten program;
- A plan for professional development for staff;
- A sliding fee scale for families participating in the program;
- An annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the program; and
- A plan to ensure that children with disabilities are integrated into programs with children who are not disabled.

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FY 2002 GRANTS

Priority Communities Grant Amount

Bloomfield	\$ 319,865
Bridgeport	5,718,742
Bristol	1,034,458
Danbury	1,459,271
East Hartford	1,164,077
Hartford	6,348,698
Meriden	1,597,801
Middletown	1,043,165
New Britain	2,188,120
New Haven	4,692,596
New London	716,325
Norwalk	2,106,838
Putnam	150,005
Stamford	2,683,636
Waterbury	4,197,650
West Haven	1,402,236
Windham	602,834

Total \$37,426,317

Severe-Need Communities Grant Amount

Ansonia	\$ 100,000
Branford	100,000
Brooklyn	100,000
Derby	100,000
East Haven	100,000
Enfield	100,000
Hamden	100,000
Killingly, Plainfield	200,000
Manchester	100,000
Mansfield	100,000
Milford	100,000
Naugatuck	100,000
Norwich/Groton	200,000
Plymouth	100,000
Stafford	100,000
Stonington	100,000
Stratford	100,000
Torrington	100,000
Vernon	100,000
West Hartford	100,000
Winchester	100,000
Windsor	100,000

Total \$2,400,000

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Alerts

Policy Alerts are issued to provide guidance to councils and providers around school readiness policies and procedures. Technical Assistance Alerts are issued to give guidance to programs on early childhood topics such as ADA and IDEA in Preschools, Transition to Kindergarten, Parent Involvement and Nutrition.

• Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority

(CHEFA) Bonding and Loan Program

Funds are available to early childhood programs through the CHEFA to fund renovations and construction for early care and education facilities. For information concerning funding, contact CHEFA at (860) 520-4001.

• School Facilities Bonding Program

Each town or regional school district may apply for a grant for a school building project. If a town or regional school district's project is a new building or expansion of an existing building for an elementary school and it includes space for a school readiness program, the percentage that the local board of education is eligible to receive shall be increased by five percentage points but shall not exceed one hundred percent, for the portion of the building used primarily for such purpose. For further information contact the Division of Grants Management, School Facilities at (860) 713-6467.

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QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Supplemental grants are available to priority school districts to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of child-care programs or school readiness programs. These grants are awarded annually and require an application from the community in response to a state Request for Proposal (RFP). To review the RFP for Quality Enhancement, please refer to the RFP button on the School Readiness Overview page.

FY 2002 Amount

Bloomfield	\$ 9,983
Bridgeport	172,693
Bristol	32,043
Danbury	42,521
East Hartford	36,292
Hartford	192,253
Meriden	48,416
Middletown	32,501
New Britain	68,220
New Haven	139,054
New London	22,058
Norwalk	64,392
Putnam	8,012
Stamford	83,669
Waterbury	129,237
West Haven	42,667
Windham	17,475
Total	\$1,141,486



LINKAGES

Accreditation Facilitation Project – <http://www.ctcharts-a-course.org/>

This statewide initiative provides intensive support to programs seeking National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation.

Connecticut Charts-A-Course – <http://www.ctcharts-a-course.org/>

Connecticut Charts-A-Course strives to bring professionalism to the field of early education and school-age care by promoting the following:

- Career development ladder for individuals working in all child-care settings
- Professional recognition for training
- Training that can be applied toward a CDA credential and college credit
- High-quality training and trainers
- Financial assistance towards training and education
- National accreditation to child-care centers

Healthy Child Care Connecticut

This state project is based on the Healthy Child Care America Campaign and promotes, through various activities, the healthy development of young children in child care in a partnership of families, child-care providers, and health providers. For further information call (203) 287-8953.

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